January, 2000, against the target of 22.736 Million Tonnes the Major Ports handled 21.116 Million Tonnes. The shortfall in target is expected to be made good in the balance period of current financial year. Therefore, it is difficult to assess the loss due to the strike.

(b) and (d) Despite best efforts by the Government to resolve various issues with labour federations amicably, the federations sometimes go on strike. All efforts are made to avert strikes by involving Regional Labour Commissioner for conciliation.

(c) During the discussions held with the federation leaders, a number of decisions were taken. The demands for the period of settlement, and applying new House Rent Allowance rates retrospectively *i.e.* from 1.1.1998, are to be considered by Government and efforts would be made to resolve these issues by 31.3.2000. As regards other issues raised by the 5 federations, these are being discussed at the level of Bipartite Wage Negotiations Committee.

Funds for Widening of NHs

573. SHRI ANIL SHARMA: Will the Minister of SURFACE TRANSPORT be pleased to refer to answer to Unstarred Question 757 given in Rajya Sabha on 7th December, 1999 and state:

(a) the names of the National Highways widened to two lanes in phased manner;

(b) whether the inter-se-priority has since been drawn and the estimated cost for this purpose in each case has since been worked out; and

(c) by which time the funds will be made available in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF SURFACE TRANSPORT (DR. DEBENDRA PRADHAN): (a) Out of an aggregate length of 1324 Kms. of National Highways, National Highway Nos. 1A, 20, 21 and 22 have already been widened to two lanes in an aggregate length of about 336 Kms.

(b) and (c) The inter-se-priority and the estimated cost are determined/drawn on year to year basis and accordingly works are

included in the successive Annual Plans depending up on the overall priority and the availability of funds. It is not possible to indicate any time frame for availability of funds for this purpose.

Impact of Global Bid by Petronet LNG on Indian Shipping Companies

574. SHRI SURESH KALMADI:
MISS MABEL REBELLO:

Will the Minister of SURFACE TRANSPORT be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the global bids invited by Petronet LNG for transportation of 7.5 million tonnes of Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) into India has effectively shut the doors on Indian Shipping Companies;

(b) whether Government are considering a written protest against the bids; and

(c) if so, details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF SURFACE TRANSPORT (DR. DEBENDRA PRADHAN): (a) Yes, Sir. An advertisement of Petronet LNG Limited in the form of global notification for pre-qualification of shipowners and operators for transportation of LNG had appeared in the newspapers dated 8.2.2000. Prima-facie, none of the Indian shipping companies appear to be satisfying the conditions stipulated therein.

(b) and (c) No, Sir. Nevertheless, as the process of inviting bids for pre-qualification of shipowners and operators for LNG transportation has commenced, steps have been initiated to facilitate participation of Indian Shipping in an active manner as far as LNG transportation is concerned.

National Highways in Maharashtra

575. SHRI SURYABHAN PATIL VAHADANE: Will the Minister of SURFACE TRANSPORT be pleased to state:

(a) the number of National Highways in Maharashtra region-wise;

(b) whether Government propose to construct such highways for the benefit of Adivasis;